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California Department of Water Resources

# NEWS

## A D V I S O R Y

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### **DWR and DFG Schedule for Public Scoping Meetings for Preparation of a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report on Restoration of the Salton Sea Ecosystem**

**Sacramento** - The California Departments of Water Resources (DWR) and Fish and Game (DFG) today announced upcoming public meetings to solicit comments on the scope and content of a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) for Restoration of the Salton Sea Ecosystem and the Preservation of its Fish and Wildlife Resources. Five scoping meetings have been scheduled for Coachella, El Centro, San Diego, Sacramento, and Oakland.

Last week DWR and DFG, on behalf of the Resources Agency, filed a Notice of Preparation with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research that formally begins the environmental compliance process for the project. DWR and DFG will act as co-lead agencies under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the purposes of preparing the PEIR. The PEIR will be completed by December 2006, as required by the recently enacted Quantification Settlement Agreement implementing legislation (Chapters 611, 612 and 613, Statutes of 2003 - SB 277 [Ducheny], SB 317 [Kuehl], and SB 654 [Machado]). The legislation establishes State policy with respect to the Salton Sea, stating "it is the intent of the Legislature that the State of California undertake the restoration of the Salton Sea ecosystem and the permanent protection of the fish and wildlife dependent on that ecosystem".

In compliance with the QSA implementing legislation, the Resources Secretary will identify a preferred alternative for restoring the Salton Sea ecosystem and permanently protecting the fish and wildlife dependent on the ecosystem. The implementing legislation requires that "the preferred alternative shall provide to the maximum extent feasible attainment of the following objectives: (1) Restoration of long-term stable aquatic and shoreline habitat for the historic levels and diversity of fish and wildlife that depend on the Salton Sea; (2) Elimination of air quality impacts from the restoration projects; and (3) Protection of water quality." The PEIR will describe the ecological values the ecosystem currently provides and evaluate the potential loss of certain values as a result of factors such as hypersalinity, eutrophication, and reduced inflows. The PEIR will analyze a wide

range of alternatives including, but not limited to, a “No Project” alternative, Partial-Sea restoration alternatives, and Habitat Enhancement alternatives.

The scoping meetings are an opportunity for responsible, trustee, and other key State, federal, and local agencies, private organizations and interested individuals to provide input to the preferred alternative formulation and selection process and to provide their views on the scope of the environmental review process. Future meeting will be held throughout the process to solicit public input.

The scoping meetings will be held at the following venues:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Time</b>
March 16, 2004	Desert Alliance for Community Empowerment building, large community room 53-990 Enterprise Way, Coachella	7 to 9 p.m.
March 17, 2004	Imperial Irrigation District Auditorium 1285 Broadway, El Centro	6 to 8 p.m.
March 18, 2004	San Diego County Water Authority, Board Room 4677 Overland Avenue, San Diego	7 to 9 p.m.
March 22, 2004	Resources Building Auditorium 1416 Ninth Street, Sacramento	2 to 4 p.m.
March 24, 2004	Elihu M. Harris State Building, Room 2 1515 Clay Street, Oakland	7 to 9 p.m.

For more information on the Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration Project, including a copy of the Notice of Preparation, visit the DWR Colorado River and Salton Sea web site at <http://www.salttonsea.water.ca.gov/>